Secretariat of Pro-Life Activities
3211 Fourth Street NE • Washington DC 20017-1194
202-541-3070 • fax 202-541-3054 • email prolife@usccb.org • web www.usccb.org/prolife

September 27, 2017

Dear Representative,

We write in strong support for H. Con. Res. 80 introduced by members from both sides of the aisle, those who consider themselves progressive as well as those who consider themselves conservative. This issue truly spans both parties and all political persuasions, highlights the serious risks and dangers of assisted suicide and calls on the Federal Government to reject the practice and to ensure that persons facing the end of their life have access to high quality and comprehensive health care.

The bi-partisan nature of this resolution, which also has strong support from the disability-rights community, underscores the serious risks of abuse and coercion posed by assisted suicide on those who are poor, elderly, disabled, members of marginalized groups, or without access to good medical care.

Legalizing assisted suicide undermines attempts to treat the true underlying causes of suicide requests, and will result in deaths that are not truly voluntary or consensual. Many people who are not terminally ill will also die, including persons who could live a long and productive life with appropriate medical treatment. Assisted suicide reflects a bias against persons with disabilities, serious illness and the elderly, facilitating an environment in which their destruction is deemed preferable to compassionately addressing their health problems. It undermines efforts to ensure that pain relief is available to all who need it, causing even greater pain and suffering to terminally ill patients and their families.

The act of prescribing a fatal dose of pills, moreover, undermines the very heart of medicine. Doctors vow to do no harm, and yet assisting in a suicide is the ultimate abandonment of their patients. Seriously ill patients—who often experience depression—need our authentic support, including doctors fully committed to their welfare and pain management as they enter their final days. Patients also need assurance that they are not a burden -- that it is a privilege to care for them as all people hope to be cared for one day. A compassionate society devotes more attention, not less, to members facing the most vulnerable times in their lives.

Every suicide is tragic, whether someone is young or old, healthy or sick. But the legalization of doctor-assisted suicide creates two classes of people: those whose suicides are to be prevented at any cost, and those whose suicides are deemed a positive good. Society removes weapons and drugs that can cause harm to one group, while handing deadly drugs to the other, setting up yet another kind of life-threatening discrimination. This is completely unjust. One's fundamental human rights and intrinsic human dignity do not wane with the onset of illness or incapacity, and so all must be protected.

For these reasons, please support H. Con. Res. 80 to expose the deadly, discriminatory and non-compassionate practice of assisted suicide in our nation.

+ Tim. Card. Dolan

+ Frank J. Dewane

Timothy Michael Cardinal Dolan
Archbishop of New York
Chairman, Committee on Pro-Life Activities

Most Reverend Frank J. Dewane
Bishop of Venice
Chairman, Committee on Domestic Justice and Human Development